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FOREIGN NATIONALITY GROUPS IN THE UNITED STATES  
SERVICES FROM THE FOREIGN NATIONALITIES BRANCH Number 3

MEMO TO THE DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC SERVICES

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THE LEGAL POSITION OF DR. BENES QUESTIONED

Word has come of a libel suit judgment in England which is said to have refused to accept the theory of Dr. Benes's legal continuity in office as President of Czechoslovakia since October 1938.

Die-hard Slovak-American nationalists who still refuse to accept Dr. Eduard Benes as legal head of the government of Czechs and Slovaks in exile have a new document to bolster their position. The document comes from London in the form of a radiogram from Peter Fridavok to the editor of the Slovak v Amerike of New York City. It tells of a decision by an English court in a libel suit brought by General Lev Prichla against Bonus Bones, nephew of President Eduard Benes and formerly editor of the official weekly Czechoslovak in London. Fridavok calls it a "judgment sensational by its political significance" because (he reports) the court refused to accept the argument of President Benes's supporters, who maintain that because he resigned from office on 5 October 1938 "under duress" Dr. Benes is still legally and constitutionally President of Czechoslovakia.

Fridavok's name will be recalled as that of one of the most extreme of Slovak nationalists abroad. At one time a

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collaborator of former Premier Hodza's in Czechoslovakia and later in exile at Paris, Pridavok now agitates openly and vehemently for an independent Slovakia. In articles written during the past year for Slovak-American papers he has castigated Dr. Hodza, whose political opposition to President Benes falls short of cooperation, as an agent of Benes. Pridavok is said to act as confidential man for <sup>See 1-1</sup> Karol Sidor, Slovak Minister to the Vatican and an important link in negotiations whereby certain Polish quarters hope to get Slovak support for Polish federation plans.\* In London Pridavok's name is associated with a Czech and Slovak opposition group which includes Francis <sup>1-1</sup> Schwarz, a member of the so-called Strihny League group which seceded from Dr. Benes's party in Czechoslovakia; Joseph Malik, former director of the Czechoslovak National Bank; and General Prchala, who in May 1939 organized a Czechoslovak Legion in Poland. There may be some link also between Pridavok and Stefan <sup>See 1-1</sup> Osusky, former Czechoslovak Minister to France, friend of Dr. Hodza, and pamphleteer.

\* A full report on Polish-Slovak-Ukrainian relations is in preparation.

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against the principle of "presidential continuity" by which the supporters of Benes justify his continuation in office. (See FN Number 105 of 13 February 1943: "Dr. Stefan Osusky and the American Slovak Opposition to Dr. Benes.")

The text of the radiogram from Pridavok has been printed by the semi-weekly Slovak v Amerike (19 October) <sup>Slo 3.1.1</sup> and by the weekly Jednota (20 October) of Middletown, Pennsylvania. Both are violent in opposition to everything Czech and Czechoslovak. In the Slovak v Amerike, the English text of the radiogram appeared under the following heading in Slovak:

"TRUTH CONQUERS

"The Benes' Suffer Defeat in London

"The editor of the Slovak v Amerike obtained on Friday from his London representative, Peter Pridavok, the following radiogram:"

There followed the text of the radiogram as given here:

"LIBEL ACTION OF HIGHEST IMPORTANCE WITHIN SO-CALLED CZECHOSLOVAK LIBERATION MOVEMENT RESOLVED BY KINGS BENCH LONDON AFTER THREE DAYS TRIAL STOP PLAINTIFF GENERAL LEV PRCHALA SUED DOCTOR BENES FORMER EDITOR OF CZECHOSLOVAK WEEKLY THE ORGAN OF BENES MOVEMENT

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WHO IS NOW BENES CONSUL GENERAL AT PRISCO STOP  
CZECHOSLOVAK EARLY 1942 PUBLISHED A DEFAMATORY  
ATTACK ON GENERAL PRCHALA AND HIS MILITARY ENTER-  
PRISE TOWARDS LIBERATION OF CZECH AND SLOVAK NA-  
TIONS IN POLAND IN 1939 STOP BENES SENTENCED TO  
APOLOGIZE PAY ALL COSTS AND UNUSUALLY HIGH DAMAGES  
\$ 150 STOP MOTIVATION OF JUDGMENT SENSATIONAL BY ITS  
POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE STOP PRCHALA'S VICTORY AB-  
SOLUTE STOP LORD JUSTICE CROOK JOHNSON DID NOT ACCEPT  
THEORY OF BENES CONTINUITY AS CONSTITUTIONAL PRESI-  
DENT OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND CONFIRMED PRCHALA'S  
PRIMACY IN ORGANIZING THE STRUGGLE OF CZECHS AND  
SLOVAKS AGAINST GERMANS STOP DETAILED REPORT AIR-  
MAILED GIVE GREATEST PUBLICITY IN AMERICAN PRESS"

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